DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 592 JC 960 327

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TITLE Some People Make Things Happen, Some Watch Things Happen, while Others Sit around and Wonder What Happened.
PUB DATE Feb 96
NOTE 8p.; In: The Olympics of Leadership: Overcoming Obstacles, Balancing Skills, Taking Risks. Proceedings of the Annual International Conference of the National Community College Chair Academy (5th, Phoenix, AZ, February 14-17, 1996); see JC 960 276.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Change; Administrator Role; Articulation (Education); Community Colleges; *Declining Enrollment; *Department Heads; *Faculty Development; *Organizational Development; *Organizational Objectives; School Business Relationship; School Holding Power; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Vincennes University IN

ABSTRACT

As a result of declining numbers of high school graduates, increasing competition from other two-year colleges, and decreasing amounts of available financial aid, Vincennes University (VU), a two-year college in Indiana, experienced a decline in enrollment of nearly 1,200 full-time equivalent students from Fall 1991 to 1995. In response, the division deans at the college undertook efforts to renew their role as campus leaders and address the causes of the enrollment decline. The deans held a series of meetings, which focused on ways to increase collaboration between divisions and resulted in the development of five goals to renew the college. These goals, with related projects currently underway, are the following: (1) strengthen the relationship between secondary and other postsecondary institutions and VU, with projects including tech prep relationships with secondary schools and a plan to have VU faculty make presentations to secondary school classes; (2) increase enrollment and retention, including efforts to recruit international students and review the orientation process; (3) enhance the current delivery of instruction and services, including efforts to provide inservice advising training to faculty; (4) develop entrepreneurial, income-producing projects with business and industry and the Workforce Development Agency; and (5) enhance professional development, providing regular inservice workshops and special tech prep workshops. (BCY)

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ED 394 592

SOME PEOPLE MAKE THINGS HAPPEN, SOME WATCH THINGS HAPPEN, WHILE OTHERS SIT AROUND AND WONDER WHAT HAPPENED

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JC 960 327

Paper Presented at the
Fifth Annual International Conference for
Community & Technical College Chairs, Deans and Other Organizational Leaders
February 14 - 17, 1996
Phoenix/Mesa, Arizona

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Phillip E. Pierpont, Ph. D.

Dr. Phillip E. Pierpont earned his BA from Loyal College, Baltimore, and his MA from the University of Scranton -- both Jesuit colleges of the Eastern Province. In 1966, he migrated to the Midwest to begin his Ph. D. studies, which were completed in 1972 with approval of his dissertation on the 17th Century American poet Edward Taylor. In 1971, he began an Assistant Professorship at Vincennes University, "the oldest college west of the Alleghenies and north of the Ohio River" and, at that time, Indiana's only comprehensive community college. In 1976, he became Division Chair of the Humanities Division, since renamed as Dean, Humanities. Along the way, he also coordinated and taught in the University's prison program at the maximum security federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, and chaired the English Department. Dr. Pierpont has also served on several state-level committees and currently is the Co-Chair of the statewide "Faculty Development Committee" of the Indiana Partnership for Statewide Education.

Mike Davis, A.C.S.W., C.C.S.W.

Mike Davis has served as Dean of the Social Science Division, at Vincennes University (Community College), since 1990. He formerly served as Chair of the Sociology/Social Work Department at the same institution from 1982 - 1990. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Evansville, and a Master of Science in Social Work from the University of Louisville. An active member and leader of numerous community, state, and professional organizations, he has also worked in community mental health centers, private agencies, and private clinical practice. He has been a participant on the Committee on Inquiry (Ethics Committee) for the Indiana Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers since 1987 and has served as chair of that committee for the past three years. He is currently teaching a course entitled, Ethics for the Helping Professions and also teaches Social Problems.

SOME PEOPLE MAKE THINGS HAPPEN, SOME WATCH THINGS HAPPEN,

WHILE OTHERS

SIT AROUND AND WONDER WHAT HAPPENED

In 1971, Vincennes University, then the only comprehensive, state-supported two-year college in the State of Indiana, was on the verge of an enrollment wave that lasted for more than two decades. With fewer than 2000 FTE students centered primarily on the college's main campus in Vincennes (and the nearby two airports that housed our aviation maintenance and flight programs), Vincennes University was still small enough to say that it had small classes and mean it -- no more than 25 or so in most sections and up to 50 in some selected lecture courses -- and could say that it presented a "family" atmosphere for both students and faculty. By Fall 1991, we had peaked at approximately 6565 FTE students on the main campus and had registered an additional 700+ FTE's at our Jasper, Indiana campus, at a military education site at Ft. Benjamin Harrison, at the American Sign Language Program located at the Indiana School for the Deaf, and at various military outreach sites outside the borders of Indiana. One of the consequences of this turbulent pace of growth was the shift from leadership to management roles by the instructional division deans who had lead the charge toward new programs that created our growth.

By the Fall of 1994, when the Division Deans of Vincennes University convinced the President of the University and the Vice-President for Instruction to fund seventeen department chairs and Deans for the February 1995 Chairs Conference in Phoenix, our enrollment had slipped to 5955 FTE students on the main campus in Vincennes -- our revenue center. By Fall 1995, our enrollment has slipped again to 5390 FTE students at Vincennes. The major, uncontrollable factor in this decline is the substantial downturn in the number of Indiana high school graduates. Other significant variables include: the increasing competition from Indiana's four-year colleges, both public and private, for those who once were not of interest to them; the decline in the availability of financial aid grants and the seeming unwillingness of students, especially minority students, to take on a significant loan debt; the availability of low skilled and semi skilled jobs in the $5-7.00 per hour range which must seem like a lot of money to students who continue to live at home after high school graduation. Whatever the causes of our enrollment decline, they rocked the Vincennes University boat. Our attendance at the 1995 Chairs conference was the first step toward some control of the consequences of these enrollment declines -- nearly 1200 FTE on the main campus since Fall 1991.

Prior to our attendance at the Chairs Conference, the Deans had begun to meet to determine how and when we became "mere managers": when we had gotten so bogged down by the paperwork and the nitty-gritty of our administrative roles that we had ceased to lead. We proposed a series of changes, and some of these were adopted -- including the major effort to refresh key department chairs last February. Immediately following the conference, we lead a series of on-campus follow-up meetings of all who attended the conference in an attempt to capitalize on the energy created by that effort. New ideas emerged, were

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presented to the administration, were given tacit approval, and then as the weight of events took its toll, we Deans found ourselves again buried in minutiae. Before anyone reading this far says, "What is wrong with these people that they can't sustain their own momentum?" I hasten to point out: none of the Division Deans has an Administrative Assistant or an Assistant Dean to whom tasks can be delegated; fewer than 20% of our department chairs have released time -- but that is another story for another time. In late Spring 1995, the Division Deans and the Deans for Curriculum Development and for Extended Instructional Services began to meet once again. In order to maximize our time, we usually began at 7 AM and ran until about 9 AM, and these meetings occurred about twice weekly until we had developed our "New Directions Pathways Goals" which we presented to the President and Vice President for Instruction in early July.

While we are not all schooled in TQM/CQI, we are all persons who used to be quite adept at "making things happen." Consequently, when we realized that we had been worked into a state of just "watching things happen," we all knew, without any votes or written agreements, that we could not stop the slide in enrollment, we -- in an institution which grants tenure and which has a high percentage of tenured faculty -- could not protect our young and energetic faculty without changing the way that we were doing business. Part of that way of doing business was, despite our basic friendship and camaraderie, tocommand our own kingdoms and to compete hard for scarce monies for instructional materials and equipment. To some extent, we haven't stopped competing, but we have begun collaborating more because none of us wanted to get up some morning and "wonder what had happened."

Actually, collaboration was the operative word in our meetings. Early in the process, we spent a good bit of time brainstorming: sometimes just "blowing smoke" and, to mix my metaphors, "tilting at windmills." To be successful, the heart of any such process must be the basic good sense of the collaborators, and while we had plenty of problems to face, we had plenty of good sense as well. After the initial brainstorming sessions, we sought the commonalities of all the many ideas we had thrown up on pulp paper taped around our meeting room. Actually, we had enough ideas to keep us all busy for a longer time than we have to solve our problems. For the most part, we were able to put aside ego and the investiture we had in pet projects/ideas, and we developed a prioritized list of five do-able and urgent goals, some of them overlapping, some totally new on our campus: e.g., the "wolfpack" approach that we recast as "developing enterprise and entrepreneurial income projects" in order not to put off the less rapacious of heart (in fact, the University has established seed money for the enterprise goal). Once our five goals were firmly established and agreed upon, we spent several weeks hashing out the directions for these goals so that we could gain approval and funding. (What we expected to happen and what has happened is that the faculty teams reshaped and often sharpened the focus of the projects. We had agreed that we would not win the support of our faculty unless they had that freedom.)

By August we had won concessions that allowed us to select faculty -- at least one FTE per Division --for released time to work in one of more of the Goal areas. Since these Goals are not direct revenue producers, this is an almost heroic step on the part of a college in the midst of a nearly 20% enrollment decline.

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Assuming an average salary of $35,000 and fringes at a 30% rate, this effort at "research and development," at recreating ourselves in new, more flexible shapes has cost the college in excess of $360,000.00 in the first year of the project. While the college has taken a bold step in providing this funding, the faculty involved have also shown some courage in accepting their roles. Once we had a green light to proceed, we each sold key department chairs on the idea and then took productive, non-clock-watching faculty from their departments to implement -- after they applied their own good sense to them -- the five goals established in our long summer of frequent and sometimes heated meetings. We took the approach that we had, literally, to sell these key faculty on the projects, to convince them that they were not being sent off on a fool's errand to do busy work. Some of the people we wanted opted out; most jumped in with both feet.

Implementation

Once the preliminary planning was concluded, it was time to implement the project. Several possible projects were identified under each goal, and an orientation session for all participants was held during the first week of the academic year. A New Direction Pathways booklet, describing the project and role of the participants, was distributed and a general overview of the project was provided at the orientation. Following is a summary of each goal and the projects which are currently underway.

Goal 1 – Strengthening the relationship between secondary and other post-secondary educational institutions and Vincennes University.

Projects

1) Maintain/Expand Tech Prep relationships with secondary schools.

2) Expand the offerings of Project Excel

3) Develop and implement "Professor in the Classroom" project -- a comprehensive plan for getting V.U. faculty into secondary school classrooms for special presentations on relevant subject matter.

14 faculty members were designated for this project with a total of 10.5 cr. hrs and 19.5 contact hrs of released time allocated.

Goal 2 – Increase enrollment, both on the main campus and at distant campuses and sites.

Projects - Recruitment

1) Explore increased recruitment of international students.

2) Review the orientation process and increase faculty/student interaction.

3) Conduct a campus survey on VU and its provision of services.

4) Conduct a statewide survey on VU and its reputation in the state.

Projects - Retention

1) Review the orientation process and increase faculty/student interaction.

2) Conduct a campus survey on VU and its provision of services.

14 faculty were designated for this goal with a total of 4.5 cr. hrs and 24 contact hrs of released time allocated.

Goal 3 – Enhancing our current delivery of instruction and services.

Projects

1) Designate a faculty member in each division as a student advocate or intervention
advisor who would work with students-at-risk.

2) Provide inservice training to faculty on advising techniques.

3) Revise the Advising Manual

13 faculty were designated for this goal with a total of 7.5 cr. hrs and 19.5 contact hrs of released time allocated.

Goal 4 – Developing enterprise and entrepreneurial income producing projects.

Projects

1) Seek, prioritize, and develop partnerships with business and industry.

2) Seek grants and collaborative projects with Workforce Development Agency.

3) Modify curriculum offerings to meet needs of distance education and nontraditional students.

17 faculty were designated for this goal with a total of 13.5 cr. hrs and 24 contact hrs of released time allocated.

Goal 5 – Enhancing the professional development of existing faculty and staff.

Projects

1) Provide a minimum of 10 inservice training/workshops to faculty on a regular basis
utilizing existing faculty and internal resources.

2) To offer a TechPrep workshop on teaching/learning styles to a minimum of 12 faculty.

3) To develop faculty support groups to look at issues such as:
Teaching critical thinking
Incorporating technology in instruction
Motivation of faculty and students

4) To provide training and information to all faculty and staff on dealing with students under the ADA.

5) To offer a minimum of 18 Writing Across the Curriculum workshops to faculty.

10 faculty were designated for this goal with a total of 9 cr. hrs and 14 contact hrs of released time allocated.